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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: INDIGENOUS "FOURTH POWER" POWERLESS

Classified By: EcoPol Chief Mike Hammer, reasons 1.4b,d

Summary

¶1. (SBU) On August 10, Emboffs met with members of the "National Mechanism for Social Control" to receive a briefing on their operations. The group, composed of leaders of national civic organizations and unions, is trying to position itself as a "fourth power" on level with the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. They claim this right based on public participation laws and statements made by President Morales, and they have submitted a proposal to the Constituent Assembly that would formalize their standing. However, they are not receiving support from the Morales administration or the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party, and therefore they are seeking support from international groups including the U.S. Embassy. End summary.

The Fourth Power That Be

¶2. (SBU) The directorate of the National Mechanism for Social Control consists of leaders of fourteen national indigenous and civic groups, with power in their own right. Members include representatives from student groups, indigenous groups, labor organizations, and the Landless Movement. According to the presentation given to Emboffs, each directorate member was elected from within his or her organization to be a National Mechanism for Social Control representative. The president, Daniel Caceres Copa, is a leader of CONAMAQ, an Andean indigenous organization. (Note: In early August 2007, CONAMAQ announced a break with the MAS over the MAS decision to eliminate the "indigenous quota" under discussion in the Constituent Assembly, which would have required 70 out of 167 legislators to be indigenous and elected by indigenous customs. A leader of one of the indigenous groups who remained in the Unity Pact supporting the MAS admitted publicly that an indigenous quota is "a little complicated" in a country where indigenous citizens are in the majority. End note.)

Fourth Power to the People

13. (C) As stated in the National Mechanism for Social Control proposal to the Constituent Assembly, they seek to be a "power of social control" based on "the right of organizations and institutions to supervise, know, evaluate and participate in public policies...." In their role as social control, they solicit complaints regarding misconduct, waste, fraud, or other misdeeds on the part of public officials. According to one participant from Beni, his region alone has over 300 complaints pending review. He then described how it was "unfair" that large land owners had so much power, which raises questions about the basis of certain complaints. According to National Mechanism for Social Control President Caceres, the group is also able to uncover corruption because they receive Central Bank reports on tax payouts to local and departmental governments; they then compare these figures with actual spending observed. The group is experiencing financial difficulties, however, and due to lack of funds they have a backlog of complaints and limited ability to investigate. (Note: Along with longer-term requests for Embassy support, they requested that the Embassy pay their rent or provide office supplies. End note.)

Speaking Truth to Power

14. (C) Although the National Mechanism for Social Control claims to have received financial support before from various countries and international groups, they stated that the MAS party is currently interfering in their funding by discouraging international groups from supporting the National Mechanism for Social Control. They stated that their request for support from the Venezuelan Embassy was denied, reportedly because they needed to receive MAS permission first. President Caceres used Venezuela as an example of the lack of transparency that justifies a national social control group, saying that President Chavez's large donations to Bolivia are not being accounted for appropriately. President Caceres added that, despite public claims of transparency and anti-corruption goals, the MAS does not want a group acting as "social control" against the MAS-led government.

Comment

15. (C) That the National Mechanism for Social Control is trying to stake its claim as the fourth power in Bolivia is a direct result of the Morales government's repeated rhetoric that social groups are a fourth power with equal stature as the legislative, executive and judicial branches and that all Bolivian institutions are subject to social control. The National Mechanism for Social Control is not MAS-controlled and has received complaints against MAS officials, therefore neither the MAS nor the Venezuelans will support the group. The National Mechanism for Social Control's resulting frustration (or even financial desperation) has led them to ask the U.S. Embassy to support the creation of President Morales' so-called fourth power. This kind of frustration is becoming evident in a number of arenas, as President Morales's and the MAS party's sweeping promises raise hopes without results. As President Morales seeks to consolidate power, it appears the MAS is only interested in a fourth power it can control. End comment.
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